



Attorneys at Law

Consortium Standards Bulletin

A ConsortiumInfo.org publication

JULY 2006
Vol V, No. 7

EDITOR'S NOTE

CERTIFICATION AND YOU

If you're reading this issue on line, there's a fair chance that you're viewing it on the screen of a WiFi enabled laptop. And as someone that is interested in standards, I expect that you're well aware that WiFi is a standard. But you might not know that the chipset that your laptop is using to access your wireless router (or Starbuck's, as the case may be) has almost certainly been certified by the [WiFi Alliance](#), even though this is what allows you to assume that you will be able to log on to another router almost everywhere you go.

The process of certification – testing and verifying compliance to a standard - is vital to the credibility and utility of standards, although we are typically not aware of how pervasive such programs in fact are. As a simple proof of that observation, glance at the bottom of your laptop's power source, or at the label on the bottom of the laptop itself, and you will find a scattershot pattern of small and inscrutable seals – each of which is the safety-related certification mark of a separate testing body (I count 21 on my Dell power source).

Our topic this month, appropriately enough, is therefore the important and perhaps underappreciated role that certification, and the process of building brand awareness in some certification programs, plays in the world of standards.

In my **Editorial** for July, I introduce the topic by highlighting both the breadth as well as the adaptability of standards and certification programs, as well as the important role that these tools are playing in addressing new and intimidating environmental challenges, such as global warming and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources.

In this month's **Feature Article**, I provide an overview of the certification techniques employed in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, an area in which sufficient resources to create robust third party administered testing tools has often been lacking, leading to the development of a spectrum of lighter weight alternatives that are not common in many other industry sectors.

As the **Standards Blog** entry for this month, I've selected a posting on a topic that I have covered in great detail for a year now: the expanding adoption of the OpenDocument Format (ODF) and the adaptation of the marketplace to a multiple document format environment. This entry focuses on an initiative announced by Microsoft early this month to fund and support the creation of a converter to facilitate the translation of documents created using its own Open XML format into documents that can be opened using ODF compliant software.

My **Consider This** essay returns to the certification theme, contrasting the adoption of a standardized, certified product family – WiFi enabled devices and routers – with another popular but proprietary high tech offering: the Apple iPod and iTunes environment. Each of these successful systems has generated a "lifestyle" impact, but the open standards based wireless lifestyle that is supported by the ingenuity (and marketing budgets) of hundreds of companies is

exploding at a rate that is an order of magnitude greater than the growth of its proprietary analogue in the music world.

As usual, this issue ends with ***The Rest of the News***, being a selection of what I thought were the most noteworthy stories of the last month, accompanied by a few observations on why I found them to be of interest.

A final note: The **CSB** is issued ten times a year, with August and December being my months to catch my breath and spend some time on other interests. As a result, I'll visit with you next in September.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue.

Andrew Updegrove
Editor and Publisher
2005 ANSI President's
Award for Journalism

The complete series of Consortium Standards Bulletins is available on-line at <http://www.consortiuminfo.org/bulletins>. It can also be found in libraries around the world as part of the EBSCO Publishing bibliographic and research databases.